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Author: Hewilia Hetmańczyk-Bajer

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Hewilia Hetmańczyk-Bajer

University of Silesia

Regional education as a significant area of preschool educational activities

Abstract: The article aims at presenting the role of regional education in teaching and upbringing of children at preschool age. The author not only points to significance of the transfer of values of the material and non-material culture to the youngest members of society, but she also puts emphasis on the need to prepare the future teachers to derive knowledge and values from wisdom, mentality, customs, and traditions of the region that they live in.

Keywords: tradition, regional education, preschool education

Tradition is the reason of the whole nation, sieved from one age into the other.

Ricarda Huch

Introduction

Traditions passed from one generation to the other occupy a significant place in the lives of all human beings as they influence their cultural identity and patriotic attitude. These are certain principles of conduct, views, beliefs, messages, and customs, which — when maintained with due care — are characterized by continuity. We are the ones who decide whether the cultivated traditions are passed to younger generations; otherwise, their message becomes neglected, which finally renders them devoid of their richness. Regional traditions are particularly valuable from the perspective of preserving the socio-cultural identity. The regional consciousness is connected with the feeling of affiliation to a given society, as well as identification with that society, its culture, language, and territory (Kisiel, 2014, p. 258).

The introduction of regionalism, conceived as a socio-cultural movement that is concentrated on taking care of and developing the cultural heritage in the region, into the educational system is not a new phenomenon. "Teaching based on regional foundations started to be incorporated in Polish schools as early as in the second half of the 20th century. It undoubtedly happened under the influence of the regional movement, developing in a number of European countries, but originating in France. It was supported by the fact that the Renaissance ideals were still vivid there, especially those of the Napoleon era, when the bond between human beings and their family land comprising a part of the nationwide homeland, was noticeable" (Toboł, 2005, p. 23). Regionalism, as the ideology of sightseeing, was introduced into the reformed school within the interdisciplinary track, named regional education, already at the beginning of the 20th century. The sightseeing slogan: "From getting to know your region to becoming familiar with your country," was spread by Aleksander Patkowski — the father of Polish regionalism, a traveler, pedagogue, and a social activist (Boczukowa, 2000, p. 61). Currently, interest in this problem is still alive and growing, despite the fact that the dynamic development of civilization, mainly in the period of the so-called social transformation, brought a hazard of pushing the tradition to the background of social life (Kisiel, 2014, p. 258).

Regional education in preschools

We have been observing an abiding interest in implementation of regionalism in education and upbringing for over ten years now. UNESCO have agreed that the years 1990—2000 were referred to as the Decade of Environmental Education. The concept of regionalism is applied creatively in Poland in teaching various subjects: Polish, history, geography, arts, as well as in elementary teaching and preschool education. The article proceeds to discuss the problems of regional education in the context of preschools, as a set of knowledge and experiences derived by a pupil from the preschool environment comes to lay the ground for protection and maintenance of national identity of the whole society.

One of the aims of preschool education delineated in the preschool, kindergarten, primary school, and other forms of preschool education curricula is to "shape the feeling of social affiliation in children (towards the family, peer group, and national community) as well as the patriotic attitude." Therefore, the idea of developing the sociocultural identity of children at the very beginning of their education, should delegate teachers with a fundamental task to be fulfilled in kindergartens.

The above aims of preschool education should be realized within all fields of educational activity of a preschool. The regional education is mentioned by field eight, regarding upbringing through art, within the scope of music, singing, hopping, and dancing, which suggests that children finishing kindergarten and continuing his or her education in a primary school, should sing child's songs and easy folk songs. Children should also eagerly take part in group singing, dancing, and making music. Regional education is also included in field 9, which, similarly to the aforementioned field 8, refers to upbringing through art, however, in this case within the scope of various art forms. Point one in the scope of this field clearly suggests the need to get children interested in selected monuments and pieces of art, along with traditions and folk customs native to their region. Therefore, broadening knowledge about the region and acquisition of particular notions, should, first of all, take place through participation in folklore and direct relations with art and culture.

In turn, the matter of passing various values underlying each society is emphasized by field 15 which refers to family, citizenship, and patriotic upbringing. In this case, we may read that "children completing kindergarten education, starting to learn in the primary school shall:

1. list first and last names of persons close to them; know where they work and what they do;
2. know the name of the city/town they live in, most significant institutions, and they are aware of social roles played by important figures, for instance a policeman, a firefighter;
3. know their nationality, their country, and its capital city;
4. name the national emblem and flag, know the Polish anthem, and are aware that Poland belongs to the European Union;
5. know that all people have equal rights."¹

This field points to the necessity of preparing the child for identification with regional values and contents. Therefore, regional education ought to commence in the closest surrounding of the child. Development of family bonds connected with their own place of residence covers familiarization with cultural traditions of the region, and then with the whole country. Thus, we make the young generation realize that what is important for our "small homeland" we live in is also significant for the whole country.

However, it needs to be borne in mind that the process of introducing children into regional traditions should not be forced upon them, but, rather, it should constitute a gradual, systematic, and multidimensional activity, adjusted

¹ Core curriculum of preschool education for kindergartens, kindergarten units in primary schools and other forms of preschool education. Attachment No.1 to the Resolution of the Minister of National Education of 23 December 2008 (Journal of Laws 15 January 2009, No. 5, item 17).

to their developmental possibilities, which is supported by properly selected forms and methods of didactic and educational work.

Forms and methods of realization of regional education in preschool education — practical actions

There are numerous methodological solutions in preschool education that support the process of satisfying child's cognitive curiosity, also within the scope of regional education. One form, which is worth paying attention to, is organization of walks and kindergarten trips, which are regarded as best way to familiarize children with nature, monuments, architecture, and historical heritage of the closest surroundings. Here, it may turn out helpful to establish cooperation with museums, ethnographic museums, culture centers, as well as didactic facilities of national and landscape parks, which support educational institutions through organization of various exhibitions, shows, workshops, contests, and folklore meetings.

Furthermore, realization of the regional education's aims should take place with participation of the local environment, represented among others by: poets, painters, social activists, representatives of local culture, creators, folklore artists, regionalists, historians, and other persons engaged in working for the benefit of the region. Meetings with interesting persons may take place both inside and outside the kindergarten, which additionally opens up the possibility of active participation of children in culture, for example through learning songs, regional dances, playing instruments, preparing art and craft works.

A significant aspect of preschool work is learning through play. Regional education contents offers varied and interesting materials designed for didactic games and plays. During games initiated by children, there is a frequent opportunity to observe customs cultivated in family homes, regarding both everyday functioning and communicating, as well as those connected with celebrations and special family feasts. Such communication facilitates the process of unveiling reality, engaging in emotional processes and practical activities. What is more, it displays excellent educational qualities (Szczurzevska, 2007, p. 9).

Discovering family traditions in light of regional traditions, illustrates another significant aspect of supporting the cultural identity of a young person. It is the family, where children learn about customs of the region they live in, from the earliest period of their life. Children may not only listen to stories told by family members, but also witness the forms of cultivation of the regional

traditions. Therefore, it is worth making a room (for example adapting a corner of the room) in the kindergarten that would be devoted to the regional matters. Collecting souvenirs left by our predecessors, for example pictures, works of folk art, and other objects that regard specificity of the region, allow for passing everyday traditions from one generation to another.

Another, equally valuable form of cooperation with children's family environment is organization of open classes and kindergarten feasts, all the more that they correspond with the subsequent seasons of the year, national or church feasts. Numerous facilities also celebrate traditions and customs of a given region, where they operate, that is, the selection of the king and queen of "donuts" on the occasion of Fat Thursday, celebrating Shrove Tuesday, April Fool's Day, Maypole, and others. Thanks to direct participation in the celebrations, children acquire more and more information about social life, they feel that they belong to the community, and in this way their patriotic feelings are shaped, like love towards homeland, joy with its achievements and beauty, or feelings of national bonds. Each feast celebrating significant events from the local environment of the country is a lesson in patriotism, respect for a close relative and one's own nationality (Hetmańczyk-Bajer, 2014, pp. 128—129).

The preschool activities may also offer a perfect occasion to integrate the academic environment with the kindergarten, and thus derive mutual benefits, which may include: expanding professional teacher-student contacts, mutual exchange of experiences, whereas students can acquire desired practice in the profession of a preschool teacher. The above-mentioned form of cooperation also engaged the students from the Department of Pedagogy and Psychology at the University of Silesia in Katowice, supervised by Hewilia Hetmańczyk-Bajer, PhD, who prepared a celebration of St. Barbara feast, aimed at the children from the Private Kindergarten and Nursery with Integration Units "Misiowa Kraina" (Teddy Land) in Zabrze.

Here, it is worth adding that the day of 4 December, that is the so-called *Barbórka*, is a highly significant feast within the Silesian lands, regarding their industrial character. This is the day of the patron saint of miners, among others, who have celebrated it with highest reverence for generations. There are numerous legends connected with St. Barbara, and miners believe that they can count on her help and rescue in case of emergency (Bazielich, 1988, pp. 341—371). This day's celebration usually begins with a ceremonial march of the miners' orchestra, through the housing districts situated around the mines, to wake up the workers. Afterwards, there is a procession formed on the mine square. All miners, dressed in their full-dress uniforms, take part in a procession through the city together with the orchestra and banners, leading to the church, where a ceremonial mass in their intention takes place. The feast is celebrated with special reverence, and the events are even more ceremonial as the most distinguished workers are decorated for their service (Kaczko, 2009, p. 185).

Hence the aim of the jointly undertaken actions was to develop children's interest, especially those regarding folk rituals, traditions and customs, and shaping pro-social attitudes and creating joyful atmosphere. The result of the undertaken cooperation is presented by a scenario of classes complemented with photographs, which are included in this article.

Regional education in view of the students of pedagogy majors — research results

A highly significant role in the life of every child in his or her preschool age is played by adults, parents or guardians in the main, and obviously by teachers. Their attitudes, engagement, and personal example will influence the manner of how children tend to think and behave. In the context of this article, it is worth paying attention to the views, opinions, and beliefs on the need to share regional education objectives, presented by people who will have an opportunity to model children's attitude and behavior in the nearest future. It is also worth finding out whether the future elementary-education teachers are equipped with sufficient knowledge about the history, culture, tradition, and tourist and natural assets of their region, to be able to trigger patriotic feelings in their pupils. This was the reason for the research conducted with a method of diagnostic survey performed on the group of 35 students of full-time studies, and 35 students of extramural studies of the 2nd year of Pedagogy, the Department of Pedagogy and Psychology at the University of Silesia in Katowice.

In the first question the students were requested to evaluate the curriculum of their studies in terms of regional education contents, whose results are illustrated in Figure 1.

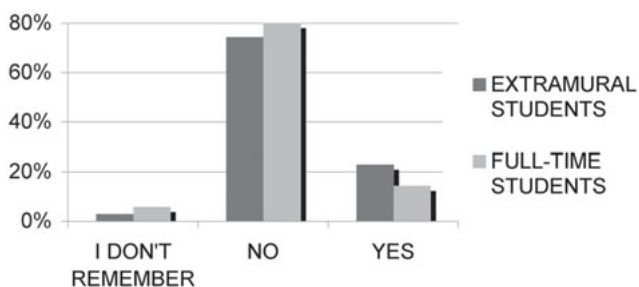


Figure 1. Does the curriculum include regional education contents?

Source: author's research.

While analyzing the data presented above, it may be noticed that the majority of students, of both full-time (26 persons — 74.3%) and extramural studies (28 persons — 80%) agree that there were no mention that would refer to the regional education program to be implemented in the studies. Not many subjects, however, pointed to particular modules, which included some elements from that scope. Table 1 includes a list of modules pointed by the students.

Table 1

**The modules which, according to the students, incorporate some
of the regional education content**

Modules — students' suggestions	Full-time students		Extramural students	
	<i>N</i>	percent	<i>N</i>	percent
Stimulation of verbal activity of a child	0	0.0	2	5.7
Music classes	0	0.0	2	5.7
General didactics	0	0.0	1	2.9
Contemporary pedagogic directions	5	14.3	0	0.0
Middle-year specialization internship	3	8.6	0	0.0

Source: author's research.

Table 1 suggests that the number of pointed modules is insignificant. What is more, choices made by the students are heterogeneous, which may prove that the regional education content influenced just a minor percentage of all assumed effects of education.

In the second place, it seemed justifiable to ask the respondents to perform self-assessment within the scope of knowledge in history, culture, tradition, and tourist and natural assets of their regions. The collected data are presented in Figure 2.

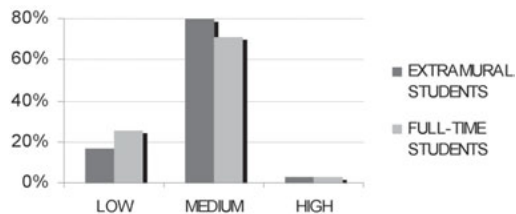


Figure 2. To what extent do you consider yourself prepared to teach regional education, that is, the history, culture, traditions, as well as tourist and natural values of your region?

Source: author's research.

The analysis of the collected research material suggests that the majority of both full-time (25 persons — 71.4%) and extramural (28 persons — 80%) students acknowledge that their knowledge of the socio-cultural heritage of their region is rather average. Only individual participants evaluated their knowledge as high

(full-time students, 1 person — 2.9%; extramural students, 1 person — 2.9%). The other participants maintain it is rather low (full-time students, 9 persons — 25.7%, extramural students, 6 persons — 17.1%).

The above analysis entails a question whether the students expect some support from the university in the field of regional education, which is illustrated by Figure 3.

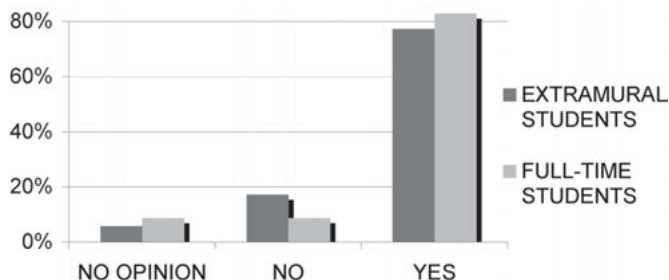


Figure 3. Are you expected to support regional education program with your own ideas, extra materials, exercises, field trips, etc.?

Source: author's research.

The collected data allow to conclude that the majority of respondents, that is, 82.2% of the full-time students (29 persons), and 77.2% of the extramural students (27 persons), notice the need to broaden the knowledge of regional education, with due university support. Such status quo remains satisfactory as much depends on the future teachers, that is, their attitudes, engagement in search for the traces of their own region's past. The process of shaping the socio-cultural identity of a child, as well as broadening his or her historical knowledge, depends both on teachers' pedagogical abilities and their knowledge of the local environment.

In the last question, the students who gave an affirmative answers, were asked to point to a form of support in the area of regional education, whose task would be to complement the deficiencies in knowledge from that scope. Data relating to this matter were collected in Table 2.

While analyzing Table 2, it may be noticed that the majority of the researched full-time students, as much as 42.9% (15 persons), chose classes in a form of additional modules, as an element of support within the scope of regional education. In turn, the majority of extramural students (31.4% — 11 persons), chose field classes, which could take place in cultural and educational facilities. With reference to this group of students, the selection of classes which would be run outside of the university is not astonishing, because studying over the weekends does not encourage organization of such classes. Arguments provided by the respondents were as follows: "[...] lectures with elements of

Table 2

Forms of students' support in the area of regional education

Students' proposals	Full-time students		Extramural students	
	<i>N</i>	percent	<i>N</i>	percent
Optional classes	1	2.9	7	20
An additional module in the form of lectures	2	5.7	3	8.6
An additional module in the form of classes	15	42.9	2	5.7
Trips	2	5.7	7	20
Field classes (e.g. in culture-educational facilities, museums, etc.)	5	14.3	11	31.4
Workshops	3	8.6	5	14.3
Meetings with interesting people from the region	3	8.6	1	2.9
Practical classes	2	5.7	2	5.7
Regional dance	0	0.0	2	5.7

Source: author's research.

regional history and field classes may turn out to be helpful, as they will allow to show the necessary knowledge to the children, and awaken their fondness towards their own region,” “a module with a theoretical and a practical part would be useful, thus we'd have a direct and an indirect contact with culture.”

Hence it may be worth taking a closer look at the suggestions proposed by the students, and while responding to their needs, create an additional module devoted to regional education, which would not only be based on the theory, but which would also enable realization of educational effects outside of the university. For that purpose, it is necessary to establish wider cooperation with centers and institutions specializing in cultivating and passing on the cultural heritage, values, and regional history. It is therefore worth highlighting that such solutions have already been accomplished, also in the weekend mode, in relation to extramural students. An example of successful cooperation was the support provided to the museum Upper Silesian Ethnographic Park in Chorzów (Górnośląski Park Etnograficzny w Chorzowie) with development of an educational-didactic offer for preschool children. Students of the Department of Pedagogy and Psychology of the University of Silesia, supervised by Hewilia Hetmańczyk-Bajer, PhD, within the classes of Methodology of preschool education, had a chance to participate in museum classes. In the final phase of the classes, they could express their opinions, and propose other solutions and suggestions. Thanks to their involvements, the chosen museum classes were enriched with physical games and work sheets for preschoolers (Hetmańczyk-Bajer, 2014, pp. 180—181).

Conclusion

A short research in the history of Polish regionalism and studies conducted in the fields of preschool education with regard to regional education, as well as the familiarization with the future teachers' opinion on regional education undoubtedly accentuates the need to implement regional education into teaching and upbringing of children at a preschool level. Referring to regional traditions constitutes a significant message for the child, namely, it presents continuity of family traditions passed from one generation to the other. While building their sociocultural identity, young persons ought to be provided with the favorable support from well-qualified pedagogical staff. Therefore, what comes to the foreground is an urgent task to encourage and prepare future teachers to foster values lying in the direct natural, cultural, and social environment of the child. These activities should be interesting enough to trigger children's respect towards what is traditional and unique, as well as the feeling of being proud of their city, town or village, and their region.

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Appendix 1

Scenario of the kindergarten celebration of *Barbórka* in “Misiowa Kraina”²

Age group: 3—4-year-old children with participation of “seniors” from the “Misiowa Kraina” nursery.

1. General aims:

- familiarization with the profession of a miner,
- familiarization with the Silesian traditions,
- familiarization with the Silesian dialect,
- perception of the need to maintain the Silesian dialect,
- development of children’s vocal skills,
- development of children’s physical fitness,
- development of manual abilities (fine motor skills).

2. Detailed aims:

- Each child knows:
 - what work of a miner consist in,
 - how a full-dress uniform of a miner and Silesian female folk clothes look like,
 - what the Silesian traditions that refer to 4 December are.
- The child can:
 - color an image,
 - prepare and glue shapes from blotting paper,
 - reflect movements of the teacher according to a song or a game,
 - sing a song entitled “My górnicy” (“We miners”), and “Idzie górnik drogą” (“A miner walks down the street”).

² Lesson scenario of the kindergarten celebration, developed by the 2nd year students of full-time studies, 1st degree, major: pedagogy, specialization: elementary and preschool education, within the middle-year specialization internship, realized in the Private Kindergarten with Integration units “Misiowa Kraina” in Zabrze, under the supervision of Hewilia Hetmańczyk-Bajer, PhD. Persons responsible for the scenario: Anna Lysko, Alicja Nowak, Dominika Musioł, Anna Hamryszak, Agnieszka Polczyk, Karolina Miśkowiec, Ewa Kurka, Sylwia Miszak, Joanna Łosak, Natalia Majnusz, Justyna Mroczek, Karolina Zmarlak, Barbara Mularczyk, Karolina Sikora, Magdalena Skubisz.

Appendix 2

Table 3
Presentation of didactic games

Course of classes	Time of realization	Methods	Forms of class organization	Educational directions, teacher's didactic resources
Welcoming a bear dressed in a miner's uniform — integration game. Each child, while holding a bear in his or her hands, tells his or her name, and then passes the bear on to another person on his or her left.	3 minutes	verbal method	group	— verbal development; — a teddy bear dressed in a mine uniform.
Visit of the invited guests — a miner and his wife. Description of the full-dress uniform of a miner and Silesian clothes of his wife. A discussion about Silesian traditions connected with 4 December.	5 minutes	verbal method	group	— mental, verbal development; — mine full-dress uniform; — female folk clothes.
"I go down to work through the shaft" — physical activity. The children are given one scarf each: red, green, yellow, or a blue one. The teacher locates four rings in the same colors on the carpet. The children run, march or hop to the music. After every verbal signal, "we go down to work through the shaft" — they sit in four rows, behind the rings matching the color of their scarf. The teacher changes location of the rings during the game.	5 minutes	active method, stimulating	group	— physical movement development; — red, green, yellow and blue scarves and rings; — CD player and records.
"Cars with coal" — art work. Children receive an image representing a car with coal. Their task is to color the image and glue balls from black blotting paper that are to symbolize coal.	15 minutes	active method	individual	— development of fine motor skills and creativity; — images that represent a car with coal, — black blotting paper, crayons.
"Find a pair" — a didactic game. The teacher distributes reversed pieces of paper with illustrations of mining work — each in two counterparts — on the carpet. Children's task is to reverse the cards, find the corresponding ones, and combine them into pairs.	8–10 minutes	active method	individual	— mental development; — pieces of paper with illustrations of mine work.
"We miners" a song with "showing."	10 minutes	a stimulating method, active	group	— physical development, music; — text of the song "We miners," CD player and records.

<p>“True or false” — a didactic game. The teacher expresses her opinion about the miners’ work. The children’s task is to determine, whether this sentence is true or false. Exemplary sentences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — The miner has a very difficult and dangerous work. (TRUE) — A miner extracts red coal. (FALSE) — Each piece of coal is round as a ball. (FALSE) — The biggest amount of coal is extracted in Poland, in Silesian voivodeship. (TRUE) — The coal may be transformed into heat, light and medicines. (TRUE) 	5 minutes	verbal method	group	— mental, verbal development.
<p>“A miner goes down the road — children participation song.</p>	10 minutes	a stimulating active method	group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — physical development, music; — lyrics, CD player and play-ers.
<p>“In the mine” — physical activity. The teacher utters a sentence, and then shows particular movements, which are repeated by children. We go the mine — marching in various direction, according to the drum’s rhythm; we dress up — imitation of dressing won and up; we go down with an elevator — coming from the standing position with two hands in front of to a squat; we walk down the pavement — the teachers make a tunnel by holding hands, children go through it; crushing the coal — children, while straddling, make exaggerated ahead movements — they imitate crushing the coal.</p>	5 minutes	active method, stimulating	group	— mental, physical development.
<p>“See you in a year!” — summing up and ending the classes. Children tell about their emotions, which accompanied them during the conducted classes. Rewarding children with commemorative certificates.</p>	3 minutes	verbal method	group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — verbal development; — commemorative certificates.

Appendix 3



Phot. 1. Visitors in the kindergarten — a miner and his wife
(Phot. Hewilla Hetmańczyk-Bajer)



Phot. 2. A commemorative photo (Phot. Hewilla Hetmańczyk-Bajer)



Phot. 3. “Cars with coal” — art work (Phot. Hewilla Hetmańczyk-Bajer)



Phot. 4. “Find a pair” — a didactic game (Phot. Hewilla Hetmańczyk-Bajer)